

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02
OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 /093 W
-----087720 231330Z /45

P 182245Z MAY 78
FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1345
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY
AMCONSUL MONTREAL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 0169

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJECT: UNION NATIONAL LEADER BLENDS REALISM WITH PIPEDREAMS

1. SUMMARY: UNION NATIONAL PARTY LEADER, RODRIQUE BIRON,
TODAY GAVE ME HIS PRIVATE VIEWS ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN
QUEBEC, AS WELL AS, A DESCRIPTION OF HIS PARTY'S POLITICAL
STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE. HE ALSO QUOTED RENE LEVESQUE ON
LONG TERM FUTURE OF PQ. END SUMMARY

2. BIRON SHARES THE VIEW OF SOME LIBERAL LEADERS THAT PQ
MAY CALL GENERAL ELECTION RATHER THAN REFERENDUM. HE REASONS
THAT PQ LEADERS REALIZE THEY COULD NOT WIN MEANINGFUL REFERENDUM
RATHER THAN LOSE FACE BY HOLDING REFERENDUM ON MEANINGLESS QUESTION,
BIRON BELIEVES LEVESQUE MAY OPT FOR GENERAL ELECTION. BIRON
POINTED OUT THAT FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COULD SUPPLY PQ WITH
IDEAL ELECTORAL ISSUE IF IT CONTINUES "MISHANDLE" SALES TAX
REBATE PROBLEM.

3. SHOULD PQ GO AHEAD WITH REFERENDUM, BIRON IS CONVINCED
QUESTION WILL BE SOME VARIATION ON REQUEST FOR MANDATE TO
NEGOTIATE STATUS OF QUEBEC WITH FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WITHOUT
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ANY MENTION OF INDEPENDENCE OR SOVEREIGNTY-ASSOCIATION. HE
ANTICIPATES THAT BOTH HE AND LIBERAL LEADER CLAUDE RYAN WOULD
SUPPORT FAVORABLE VOTE ON SUCH VAGUE AND MEANINGLESS QUESTION.
ONLY PURPOSE OF SUCH A REFERENDUM, HE AGREED, WOULD BE TO FULFILL
PQ PRE-ELECTION PROMISE OF REFERENDUM WITHOUT RISKING VIRTUALLY
INEVITABLE DEFEAT IN LEGITIMATE QUESTION.

4. NEXT ELECTION IN QUEBEC WILL PRODUCE MINORITY GOVERNMENT, BIRON PREDICTED. HE CONTENDS THAT CONSERVATIVE SUPPORTERS OF PQ ARE BECOMING DISENCHANTED WITH GOQ'S ECONOMIC POLICIES AND "ANTI-BUSINESS BIAS." HE IS HOPEFUL THAT HIS PARTY WILL SUCCEED IN ATTRACTING LARGE NUMBER OF THESE DISAFFECTED PEQUISTES IN RURAL AREAS. CONSERVATIVE NATIONALISTS ARE UN'S NATURAL CONSTITUENCY, BIRON COMMENTED. IN EFFORT ATTRACT THEM, UN WILL ORIENT ITS TACTICS TOWARDS ATTACKING PQ ON ECONOMIC ISSUES WHILE GENERALLY SUPPORTING GOVERNMENT ON NATIONALIST ISSUE WITHOUT COMPROMISING COMMITMENT TO FEDERALISM.

5. SUPPORT FOR CLAUDE RYAN HAS ALREADY PEAKED, BIRON ASSERTED. THE UN LEADER CLAIMED THAT LIBERAL DEPUTIES AND MEMBERS OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESS GALLERY HAVE CONFIDED THEIR MISGIVINGS RE RYAN LEADERSHIP TO UN FRIENDS. RYAN IS "TOO AUTHORITARIAN" AND "TOO RIGID" TO BE AN EFFECTIVE POLITICAL LEADER, BIRON CONTENDED. THEREFORE HE WILL NOT BE ABLE REGAIN MORE THAN FRACTION OF DISAFFECTED LIBERALS, LEAVING REMAINDER TO UN, BIRON OPTIMISTICALLY PREDICTED.

6. FOR LONGER TERM BIRON FORESEES PLOITICAL REALIGNMENT IN QUEBEC INEVITABLE. AS SUPPORT FOR THIS THESIS, BIRON CITES NO LESS AN AUTHORITY THAN RENE LEVESQUE HIMSELF. OVER LATE NIGHT WHISKIES, LEVESQUE ALLEGEDLY ADMITTED TO BIRON THAT PQ COULD NOT

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SURVIVE SETTLEMENT OF SEPARATIST ISSUE. QUEST FOR POLITICAL SOVEREIGNTY IS ONLY CEMENT THAT HOLDS TOGETHER PARTY WHICH NOW INCLUDES ELEMENTS RANGING FROM RURAL CONSERVATIVE NATIONALISTS TO URBAN MARXISTS LEVESQUE SAID. ULTIMATELY, QUEBEC POLITICS WILL RETURN TO CLASSIC NORTH AMERICAN MODEL WITH TWO LARGE PARTIES REPRESENTING CONSERVATIVES AND MODERATE LIBERALS. IN QUEBEC, THERE ALSO LIKELY BE A SMALL SOCIALIST PARTY AS NDP NOW EXISTS ON FEDERAL LEVEL.

7. COMMENT: BIRON'S OPTIMISM AS REGARDS UN ELECTORAL CHANCES SEEMS WILDLY ILLUSORY. HIS COMMENTS ON CLAUDE RYAN NO DOUBT REFLECT VIEWS OF SOME LIBERAL POLITICIANS AND JOURNALISTS. HOWEVER DO THEY ALSO ACCURATELY REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THE VOTERS? OTHERWISE, BIRON'S ANALYSIS OF PQ REFERENDUM AND ELECTORAL STRATEGY IS INTERESTING AND RATIONAL. QUOTES OF COMMENTS BY RENE LEVESQUE ARE FASCINATING GLIMPSE OF THIS HARD-HEADED POLITICIAN'S ANALYSIS OF FUTURE. MCNAMARA

NOTE BY OC/T: MESSAGE DELAYED IN TRANSMISSION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARTY LINE, PARTY LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978QUEBEC00169
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780217-0371
Format: TEL
From: QUEBEC
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780545/aaaablmn.tel
Line Count: 115
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 6cc2309b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2650880
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UNION NATIONAL LEADER BLENDS REALISM WITH PIPEDREAMS
TAGS: PINT, CA, (BIRON, RODRIQUE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6cc2309b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014